

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2003

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER *Hearing on Iraq Reconstruction and Stability Operations: The Way Forward*

This is the 8th full committee hearing since the war started at which we will review the conduct and implications of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It will not be the last, as there are several aspects of the war and ongoing operations that will continue to interest us. Today, we are fortunate to hear several different perspectives assessing the situation on the ground and the best way of moving forward.

Each of our witnesses brings a unique perspective to the task of stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq. And clearly, there is a vast range of different opinions about what our next steps in Iraq should be. They aren't necessarily ideologically consistent. Some analysts—from both the left and right—argue that we should accelerate the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people. Others, from both ends of the ideological spectrum, want to delay that transfer until we're confident that the Iraqi people are prepared for representative government. In truth, you can pick almost any issue associated with reconstruction and stability operations in Iraq and find two, or three, or four, or five, or perhaps a dozen extremely well-informed, intelligent, and experienced people who will disagree on it.

Nevertheless, at the end of the day, the Administration and this Congress have to make decisions amid conflicting interpretations of what's happening on the ground and opposing recommendations about the way forward. In that kind of environment, our best course is to set priorities and adjust to continual changes in the situation while learning from past experience.

The Administration is working towards that end and constantly reassessing the right course of action in Iraq. This means that some policies which were appropriate yesterday may not be the right answer tomorrow. Anyone looking for events to unfold in Iraq exactly according to some pre-conceived master plan is going to be disappointed. That's not how government—or warfare against a terrorist enemy—works, as most of us in Congress will be quick to admit. We should all keep that in mind as we offer our suggestions about the future course of action in Iraq.

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